STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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THE CNN EFFECT: STRATEGIC ENABLER OR OPERATIONAL RISK?

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Margaret H. Belknap

TITLE: The CNN Effect: Strategic Enabler or Operational Risk?

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 30 March 2001 PAGES: 33 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The military and the media have significantly improved their relationship since the days of the Vietnam War, America's first television war. Beginning with the Vietnam War, commanders faced a new challenge— directing their units before a television camera. Today strategic leaders may find themselves directing commands before a live camera, one that never blinks, on a global stage. Satellite technology and the proliferation of 24/7 news networks have created and increased the so-called "CNN effect" on strategic level decision-making and how warfighters direct their commands. The military must understand, anticipate, and plan for this new dynamic. This paper chronicles military-media relations from Vietnam to today and discusses the media as a potential source of operational risk as well as a strategic enabler. Friction between the military and the media will continue to some degree in the future. In spite of this friction, strategic leaders and warfighters must harness the increasing power of the fourth estate as a strategic enabler while hedging against operational risk.

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THE CNN EFFECT: STRATEGIC ENABLER OR OPERATIONAL RISK?

The process by which warfighters assemble information, analyze it, make decisions, and direct their commands has challenged men since the beginning of warfare. Beginning with the Vietnam War, commanders faced a new challenge— directing their units before a television camera. And today, commanders at all levels can count on operating "24/7"[1] on a global stage before a live camera that never blinks. Naturally, this changed environment will have a profound effect on how strategic leaders make their decisions and how warfighters direct their commands.

The impact of this kind of media coverage has been dubbed "The CNN effect." The term was born in controversy. President Bush's decision to place troops in Somalia after viewing media coverage of starving refugees was sharply questioned. Were American interests really at stake? Was CNN deciding where the military goes next? Less than a year later, shortly following the broadcast pictures of a dead American serviceman being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, President Clinton's decision to withdraw US troops seemed to confirm the power of CNN. Today, with the proliferation of "24/7" news networks, the impact of CNN alone has been diminished. Thus, for the purpose of this paper, "The CNN effect" is synonymous with the collective impact of all real time news coverage.

The advent of real time news coverage has led to immediate public awareness and scrutiny of strategic decisions and military operations as they unfold. Is this a net positive or negative gain for strategic leaders and warfighters? The military welcomes the awareness but is leery of the scrutiny. The information age fourth estate's vast resources offer commanders exceptional opportunities. Yet, the media gets mixed reviews from the military. Many in the military view the intrusion of the media as a potential operational risk and, perhaps, a career risk. But, the military needs the media to keep Americans informed and engaged in order to garner public support for their operations. At best, the CNN effect seems to be viewed as a double-edged sword, both as a strategic enabler and a potential operational risk.

This paper will begin with an analysis of the evolution of the military-media relationship in the television age. This will provide the basis for some important insights on why the military and the media have such a tenuous relationship. In spite of such a relationship, this paper will argue that the military needs the media now more than ever. Thus, strategic leaders and senior warfighters must explore how they can best use the media as an enabler while mitigating potential operational risks.

MILITARY-MEDIA RELATIONS: A LOOK BACK

> While there is—or should be—a natural convergence of interests in providing to the public accurate information about our armed forces and what they do, there is at the same time an inherent clash of interests (especially acute when men are fighting and dying) between military leaders responsible for success in battle and for the lives of their commands, and a media intensely competitive in providing readers and viewers with quick and vivid 'news' and opinion.
>
> —General Andrew J. Goodpaster, USA (Ret)
> Former Supreme Allied Commander, Europe

If one views the media as representing the people in Clausewitz's trinity[2] (of the people, the military and the government) the first half of General Goodpaster's statement regarding a "natural convergence of interests" rings true. In a perfect world, with the media serving as the lens for the American people, the military needs the media to ensure equilibrium among the people, its elected officials, and its subordinate military. Yet, General Goodpaster's reference to a clash of interests is also true. The media, though committed to getting the story right, is also in the business of reporting exciting news that sells. And it is this "clash" that has stymied the military-media relationship, especially since the advent of television.

Though this new technology "should" have brought the military closer to its policy-makers and the people, it did not. The confluence of events, with a TV in every living room, a failed policy in Vietnam, and a lost war, served to sharply divide the military and the media. This painful experience planted seeds of hatred in the military toward the media that permeated the military culture for decades. COL (Ret.) Henry Gole, writing about attitudes of Army War College students in the 1980's, wrote, "Some 20 years after their experience in Vietnam, student attitudes toward the media were overwhelmingly negative and seemingly permanent, at least in that generation of embittered officers."[3] Later, in 1990, LTG (Ret.) Bernard Trainor noted that generations of officers (those at service academies in the 80s) who were in diapers during Vietnam also disdained the media. According to Trainor, "The credo of the military seems to have become 'duty, honor, country, and hate the media'."[4]

In addition to the "clash" between military and media objectives, there is a cultural cleavage that some would say is sharpened by having an all-volunteer force. Joe Galloway of U.S. News & World Report calls the cultural gap, "a struggle between the 'anarchists' and the 'control freaks'."[5] The military want to control, as much as possible, everything on the battlefield or area of operations. On the other hand, the reporters want unfettered access to all aspects of the operation. Commanders worry over leaks of information that might compromise an operation. Keeping secrets is anathema to a reporter. Exacerbating these divergent

tendencies are the different personalities the two professions attract. The military attracts people who follow the rules; the media attracts those who thrive on "less is more" when it comes to establishing rules for reporting. Nonetheless, both media and military share a commitment to American freedoms and neither wants a news story to be the cause of a single American soldier's death.

While military-media relations changed over the last half-century, information age warfare has changed and the nature of military deployments has also changed. The next several paragraphs will review the military-media evolution from the Vietnam War to today's peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance missions.

VIETNAM (1961-75)

> The light shone by the media is not the regular sweep of the lighthouse, but a random searchlight directed at the whim of its controllers.
>
> —*Douglas Hurd*

The war in Vietnam was a seminal event in military-media relations. It marked the first television coverage of war and a monumental shift in relations between the media and the American military. It also marks the last time reporters enjoyed unfettered access and no censorship in an American war. Americans saw battle scenes with real soldiers, not John Wayne or Errol Flynn, but real soldiers as actors on the screen. Said one American infantryman in Vietnam in 1965, "Cameras. That's all I see wherever I look. Sometimes, I'm not sure whether I'm a soldier or an extra in a bad movie."[6] The evening network news brought images of American soldiers killing, American soldiers being wounded and killed, displaced civilians, and destroyed Vietnam villages into American living rooms on a nightly basis. These images were more powerful than any print medium could ever be. And these images were America's first experience with "real" war images since no war had been fought on American soil since the Civil War.

Prior to the Vietnam war, the American press had generally supported national war efforts and the national leadership with positive stories. The Vietnam war was the first time that reporters reported on American units that lacked discipline, used drugs on the battlefield, and had US soldiers questioning war aims while the war was ongoing.[7] These stories, though factual, were viewed by the military as "negative." Moreover, the uniformed leadership viewed these stories as a major reason they were losing the war at home while they were winning the battles in Vietnam.

In a war without front lines, reporters reported on wherever they could get transportation to and whatever happened there.[8] This kind of reporting led military leaders to feel as though coverage was random and, when negative, biased. Reporters viewed the official version of the war reported at the nightly "Five O'Clock Follies" with disdain as they had seen a very different picture out on the battlefield that same day. This fueled the media's skepticism and distrust of military leaders and government officials by most reporters covering the war.[9]

The media's enormous negative coverage of the Tet offensive marked the turning point in the Vietnam war and, as such, became the basis for heated debate as to whether the military or the media lost the Vietnam war. Future General Colin Powell, then a Command and General Staff College student, recalled seeing these images:

> The morning of February 1st 1968 I came out of the bedroom, put on the coffee pot and turned on the TV news. I was stunned. There on the screen were American GIs fighting on the grounds of the US Embassy and ARVN (South Vietnamese) forces battling for the Presidential Palace in the heart of Saigon. The Viet Cong, supported by North Vietnamese army units, had launched a coordinated strike against 108 of South Vietnam's provincial and district capitals. When I went to class that day the atmoshere was one of disbelief as if we had taken a punch in the gut. Fighting over the next few days continued to be fierce and twenty-six days passed before Hue was liberated. By then, the lovely former capital where I had served lay in ruins, with at least 2,800 of its people executed by the enemy.... The images beamed into American living-rooms of a once faceless capital had a profound effect on public opinion. Tet marked a turning-point, raising doubts in the minds of moderate Americans, not just hippies and campus radicals, about the worth of this conflict and the anti-war movement intensified.[10]

As General Powell correctly asserted, the American public could not sustain support for the images before their eyes. Meanwhile, the media's reporting of these events, in a war without a front, biased American opinion as to whether America's military was winning or could win the war. The disturbing images on the TV screen were in sharp contrast to the official reports by the government and military leadership that the US was, in fact, winning the war and would be out of Vietnam soon. But the initial reports on Tet also were misleading. In his definitive work on media coverage during the Tet period in Vietnam, Peter Braestrup writes:

> Compared to the far larger attacks on Tan son Nhut air base, as well as other actions in the Saigon area, the embassy fight was minor. But because of its "symbolism" and, above all, its accessibility to newsmen, it dominated the initial Tet coverage. Moreover, because of confusion and haste, the first reports made it seem that the foe had succeeded, not failed, in seizing his objective: the embassy chancery. Even as the fog cleared, corrections were slow in coming. Newsmen, this reporter

included, were willing, even eager, to believe the worst. It was a classic case of journalistic reaction to surprise.[11]

After Tet in 1968, the reports began to be about the difference between what Washington said versus what reporters in Vietnam saw. The media discredited military official reports on the progress of the war, thus creating a divide that would last for decades.

What did the US military learn from this? They definitely learned that they needed the support of the American people—trying to hide two parts of Clausewitz's triangle from the third didn't work. It became the story. What the military failed to see was the importance of the media as a conduit to the people. This failure was clearly evidenced in the next conflict, Grenada.

GRENADA (1983)

If the US military can be criticized for fighting the last war when approaching the next war, the same can be said for its approach to handling the press in Grenada. The overwhelming lesson from Vietnam seemed to have been, "Keep the press out!" Grenada offered the military the opportunity to do just that. Grenada, a small island located south of Barbados in the Caribbean, presented itself to the military as an opportunity to easily control access to the area of operations. President Reagan left the decision for media access to the military and, ultimately, it rested with the operational commander, USCINCLANT, Admiral Metcalf. Admiral Metcalf banned reporters from Grenada, which infuriated them.

Even worse, a few journalists managed to get a small boat to transport them from Barbados. As they approached Grenada, Admiral Metcalf personally ordered shots fired across the bow of the media's vessel. The vessel turned around and returned to Barbados with the American media members aboard fuming. Later, Metcalf was asked by one of the reporters who had been on the approaching boat what he would have done had the reporters not changed course. Metcalf replied, "I'd have blown your ass right out of the water!"[12]

Metcalf's plan was to allow the press in after the operation was complete. But, under pressure from the press and Congress, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Vessey, ordered Admiral Metcalf to accommodate reporters starting on the third day of the operation, 28 October 1983.[13] Of the nearly 400 journalists waiting in Barbados only 15 journalists were included in "the first group of journalists—a media pool to be precise—[that] landed on the island of Grenada to cover what combat actions remained."[14] General Vessey considered this failure to incorporate the media in this operation from the beginning to be a "huge mistake at the national level."[15]

After Grenada, General Vessey appointed a commission to study military-media relations. The final panel was comprised of active duty military and retired journalists. It was headed by retired Major General Winant Sidle for whom the panel and its report were named. It's worth noting that this panel was doomed from the start. The original concept was to have both journalists and military members on the commission. But the media organizations were unanimous in their belief that they should not be members of a government-sponsored commission.[16] One might interpret that to mean that no active journalist wanted his or her name "on the record." Instead, journalists appeared as witnesses before the Sidle panel.

In addition, members of the media were unanimous "in being opposed to pools in general. However, they all also agreed that they would cooperate in pooling agreements if that were necessary for them to obtain early access to an operation".[17] The establishment of press pools was the key recommendation of the Sidle Report and the most controversial. The media panel members agreed with the basic recommendation:[18]

> When it becomes apparent during military operational planning that news media pooling provides the only feasible means of furnishing the media with early access to an operation, planning should support the largest possible press pool that is practical and minimize the length of time the pool will be necessary.

But three full pages of comments highlighting division on what various aspects of this recommendation exactly meant followed this agreed upon recommendation.

PANAMA (1989)

The Sidle report was generally considered a success by the military and the press. The military felt confident that they could control media access by controlling "pools" of reporters. The media was pleased that the Chairman would formally instruct commanders to plan to incorporate the media in its operations from the earliest planning stages. But, planning for the media in Operation Just Cause translated to keeping the media in the dark to ensure secrecy and then allowing a tightly controlled media pool in country after the start of hostilities. The military provided little support to the media. Without transportation the media could not get the whole story. In their historical chronology of "War and Media", Miles Hudson and John Stanier describe the early hours of Operation Just Cause:

> Meanwhile the unfortunate Washington press correspondents had landed at the US Howard Air Force Base in Panama some five hours after most of the action had taken place. After a further delay of two hours, a helicopter was found to move the reporters. Demanding to be taken to the scene of the action, they were flown only into the base at Fort Clayton, from which they could see little and find out less. During the morning the frustrated

> newsmen were given a briefing by the Charge d'Affaires at the US Embassy, John Bushnell. One reporter indignantly described the briefing as 'a history lesson'. At last the pool of reporters was taken to the center of Panama City, where again most of the action was over, but as they flew in, they saw smoke rising from the Comandancia, the headquarters of the PDF, and demanded to be taken there. They were told that it would be 'too dangerous for them' and that even a flight around the city was too risky to be undertaken.[19]

This treatment did not appear to support the recommendations of the Sidle Report. Media access was nearly as limited as it had been in Grenada. But the decision to ignore the recommendations of the Sidle Report by essentially excluding the media until the operation was ongoing and then tightly controlling and censoring information was made at the highest level of government.[20] This frustrated reporters and, perhaps, precluded the military from demonstrating their technical and tactical competence. While live reporting had missed what was later described by Colin Powell as a "sloppy success" in Granada,[21] the Panama operation was carefully planned, rehearsed, and executed.

In spite of missing the first hours of the invasion and subsequent sequestering of the press by the military, reporters did get out and did report. For CNN, this was its "first war as a media event."[22] This live reporting frustrated Colin Powell, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, because armchair strategists were critiquing General Max Thurman's operations as they unfolded. This in turn led to pressure on the White House to direct Secretary of Defense Cheney to direct Powell to pass along orders he himself did not agree with.[23] Powell realized that this was the beginning of a new information age military-media relationship. He later reflected, "This was a new, tough age for the military, fighting a war as it was being reported. We could not, in a country pledged to free expression, simply turn off the press. But we were going to have to find a way to live with this unprecedented situation."[24]

In sharp contrast, CNN's Peter Arnett's reaction was filled with excitement, "The Panama story showed CNN just how alluring live coverage of a crisis could be. CNN now had the technology, the skills and money to go live anywhere in the world."[25] To get that live coverage, reporters could not confine themselves to press pools controlled by the government. To prepare for the next war, correspondents would need to be less dependent on the government for access, communications, and transportation. Information technologies put the reporters back on the battlefield in the Gulf War and this time they were live.

GULF WAR (1991)

Fifteen years after the end of Vietnam, American forces deployed to the Persian Gulf in what turned out to be an overwhelmingly successful operation. The American people were surprised that the military was so strong, so ready and so effective. Some would argue that their surprise of the American military's prowess was due to fifteen years of biased reporting by a media whose culture had not changed to reflect the positive changes in the military since 1975.[26] Others point out that the press missed the "good news" story of Operation Just Cause because the press was shut out.[27] And by the time the media did get in to Panama, they were frustrated because they had missed the story and because the military did not have proper accommodations for them.

Operation Desert Storm "was the most widely and most swiftly reported war in history."[28] In addition to being the first "CNN War", this war also marked a turning point in military-media relations and a turning point for Americans' view of that relationship. Colin Powell learned his lesson from the Panama invasion and ensured not only media access but that the "right" kind of spokesman stood before the camera lens before the American audience. Powell recalled, "we auditioned spokespersons. ... We picked Lieutenant General Tom Kelly, as our Pentagon briefer because Kelly not only was deeply knowledgeable, but came across like Norm in the sitcom Cheers, a regular guy whom people could relate to and trust."[29]

Powell also understood that live press conferences meant that the public would see both questioner and responder. Ever since the Vietnam war, the public viewed the media as fighting to get "the truth" from a military hiding behind a cloak of secrecy and a government spending $600 on toilet seats. During the Gulf war, Americans saw both media and military on the TV screen. Powell writes, "when the public got to watch journalists, even the best reporters sometimes came across as bad guys."[30] Perhaps the strongest evidence of the shift in American perceptions was a Satruday Night Live skit. Toward the end of the Gulf war the media was ridiculed on Saturday Night Live. They were portrayed as enemy Iraqis trying to wrestle Americans war plan secrets away from an Army spokesperson.

In general, the media were supportive of the American soldiers in the Persian Gulf. Though reporting was positive, coverage was not balanced nor did it convey the whole story on the battlefield. Journalists were more or less welcomed by unit commanders. The Army was reticent to "embedding" the media while the Marine Corps welcomed media attention.[31] Thus, the Marine Corps enjoyed overwhelmingly good and proportionally larger press coverage for a

relatively smaller role in the war.[32] Following the war, Army Major General Paul E. Funk told a group of journalists:

> When I returned from Southwest Asia, I was upset to find that people did not know the 3rd Armored Division and VII Corps had been in a very heavy fight under heavy contact with some of the enemy's first-rate units. The story was not well told enough about the people who did the fighting.... I had requests for interviews the same day we had briefings for the attack, but I felt I did not have time for them. I did not try to avoid the interviews, but on the other hand, I did not seek the publicity either. In retrospect, I probably should have for the division's sake.[33]

Colonel Barry E. Willey, then a public affairs officer, concluded, "Most military commanders would have to agree that the media coverage of Desert Shield/Desert Storm was balanced and generally favorable where cooperation, patience and tolerance were evident."[34]

SOMALIA (1992-93) AND HAITI (1994)

America's involvement in Somalia is an example of the "push" and "pull" effects of television imagery.[35] The heart-wrenching images of starving people in Somalia "pushed" US troops into Somalia coining the phrase "the CNN effect". Within a year, the horrible images of an American soldier being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu "pulled" US troops out.[36]

Somalia was also an example of careful planning for involvement of the media. Some thought it was too well-planned. As the Marines arrived on a Somali beach that looked more like a movie set than a real beach, it appeared as though the Marines were posturing before the cameras under the bright television lights. Nonetheless, the reports on media access were positive. According to Frank Aukofer and William P. Lawrence in their 1995 report of military-media relations, "There were few if any complaints from the news media about their treatment by the military in Somalia or Haiti."[37]

For Operation Restore Democracy, in Haiti, the military planned to incorporate the media well in advance of the operation. Reporters were given top secret plans for the operation prior to the planned invasion and David Wood, a seasoned national security correspondent for Newhouse News, was assigned a seat on the command and control aircraft that would oversee the operation.[38] While Powell, Nunn, and Carter were negotiating with Cedras, the Pentagon was negotiating with reporters. Could the media stay in their hotels for the first 12 hours?[39] How about a news blackout for the first 6 to 8 hours? Ultimately, the media agreed to a self-imposed embargo on "all broadcast video depicting or describing troop landing locations during the first hour of the intervention."[40] The media also agreed not to repeat the use of lights for

which both they and the Marines had been ridiculed for following their arrival to Somalia. "While General Powell thought it was silly, there is a broad consensus that the coverage of those landings was an embarrassing fiasco for both the networks and the military."[41]

BOSNIA (1995-present)

In what was considered a "bold and innovative" move by the Army in military-media relations, the Army decided to "embed" about two dozen reporters in the units deployed to Bosnia in late December 1995.[42] Embedding the reporters in the units means that the reporters lived with and traveled with a unit for an extended period of time. For the Bosnia operation, reporters were assigned to units based in Germany a week or so before deployment so that they could observe pre-deployment training. Then these reporters traveled to Bosnia with their units and stayed with them for two to three weeks. Commanders hoped that this arrangement would produce positive stories for the Army, thus, generating support from the American people while bolstering soldiers' morale.[43] Though the press coverage of the Army's deployment to Bosnia generally achieved these objectives, it also produced some controversial stories.[44]

In December of 1995, Wall Street Journal reporter, Tom Ricks, reported remarks made by Colonel Gregory Fontenot who was commanding the first armored brigade to enter Bosnia. Ricks reported that Fontenot warned two black American soldiers that Croats were racists and he expressed reservations that the American military would be out of Bosnia within 12 months.[45] This latter view was in sharp contrast to the White House's official position. The next day, the New York Times published an article in which a "senior administration official" characterized Fontenot's statements as: "very serious remarks of serious concern. Clearly if they are accurately reported they represent bad judgment, extremely bad judgment."[46] The "senior" official turned out to be an officer junior in rank to Fontenot assigned to the National Security Council.

Fontenot's remarks and their press coverage stirred a controversy within the military. Was this promising brigade commander passed over for promotion to flag rank because of Ricks' reporting? The pejorative title of Richard Newman's case study that details the controversy, Burned by the Press: One Commander's Experience, suggests that the answer is yes. However, the study itself offers little evidence to support a direct linkage between Ricks' articles and Fontenot's promotion potential. However, Professor Charles C. Moskos, author of numerous books on the sociology of the military, points out:

> This incident has consequences beyond its immediate effect on Colonel Fontenot's career. At one level is the question of the impact on unit morale

> when a respected commander is rebuked in the national media. The other is the chilling effect on military personnel when journalists are around. The message is clear: stay clear of reporters, even friendly ones, lest one's career might be jeopardized.[47]

Though the question of whether press coverage halted Fontenot's career will never be answered, many important lessons emerged from his experience.[48] Most importantly, the practice of embedding reporters was judged to be a success by reporters and the 1st Armored Division's commander, Major General William Nash.

KOSOVO (1999-present)

> Kosovo represented a setback for relations between the military and media. The Pentagon's whole approach left a lot of unnecessary ill feelings among reporters, particulary those of us who have worked very hard to try to understand the military and handle sensitive subjects responsibly.
>
> —Bradley Graham, defense reporter
> *The Washington Post*

Kosovo serves as an illustration of the sharp contrast between military-media relations during war versus peace operations. Whereas during the peacekeeping phase in Bosnia the media was embraced by the military, during the Kosovo air campaign, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, General Wesley Clark issued a "gag order" that angered reporters. Clark's policy led to numerous stories about the lack of information provided by NATO and the Pentagon.[49] Some stories went so far as to compare the Pentagon's handling of the press with that of Vietnam.[50] Reporters, frustrated by daily official briefings that provided little information, tried to get out to the field to get the '"real" story. The gag order also created an opportunity for Slobodan Milosevic to tell his side of the story. Angered by Milosevic's disinformation campaign, Clark demanded that NATO be allowed to bomb the Serb's TV station.[51] Following the air campaign, the military reverted back to the practice of embedding reporters in units.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

In spite of the heightened tensions during the Kosovo air campaign, the military and the media seem to be on much better terms than a decade ago. At the most recent US Army War College Media Day, many visiting journalists remarked that the era of "hating the media" seemed to have passed.[52] At the very least, War College students have come to realize the importance of learning how to get along with the media. This is evidenced by the popularity of the War College's "Military and the Media" elective. Further, in a recent survey of 927 military

officers asked to respond to the statement "The news media are just as necessary to maintaining the freedom of the United States as the military", 83% expressed agreement.[53]

But a 1999 research effort by James Kitfield details the enduring cultural divide between the two institutions. [54] He adopts labels for the two groups from Joseph Galloway, US News and World Reporter — the "control freaks"(military) and the "anarchists"(media).[55] This cultural gap has grown since the Vietnam War because the military is now a more conservative, all volunteer force. Thus, the military lacks the diversity across socio-economic classes and political views it once had. Meanwhile, the formerly white male media elite has broken barriers to women and minorities who tend to have liberal views on such issues as gays and women's rights. The two groups attract different types of people to support their divergent modes of operation. For example, the military depends on people who respect authority while a chief role of the media is to question authority.[56] In spite of this gap, both sides agree that "it is very important for the military and the media to work together in the public's interest."[57]

In an age of multiple 24-hour cable news networks together with satellite technology, the CNN effect will exert even greater pressures on the tension between the "control freaks" and the "anarchists." For the strategic leader and warfighter, it is important to understand these tensions and how to balance the military's need to control information as a matter of operational security with the media's desire to inform the public. It is also important for strategic leaders and warfighters to understand the media as a potent force mutilplier in a wide variety of areas. Recognizing the power of television, Colin Powell instructed National Defense University students, "Once you've got all the forces moving and everything's being taken care of by the commanders, turn your attention to television because you can win the battle or lose the war if you don't handle the story right."[58]

TEMPO

Live, 24/7 broadcast media operations puts tremendous pressure on strategic decision making. The power of images to shape perceptions is far greater than print media and reaches a broader audience.[59] This together with the speed at which a highly competitive cable news industry is bringing these images to the public is increasing pressure at the strategic level to react quickly. For example, during the Gulf War the Bush administration, pressured by images of starving Kurds, decided to air drop relief supplies and later developed a plan, Operation Restore Hope, to feed them. Even without the images, the Bush administration, "would have made the same decision. But the news media accelerated the decision-making process" by

bringing the issue to the President's attention faster.[60] In 1998, James Rubin, then Chief Spokesman for the US State Department, answered a question about whether the CNN effect created an urgency to respond to world events by saying, "yes, there is a greater urgency to respond. The harder question is does it change your response."[61]

Decision-making in a rapidly changing environment where the decision makers are at odds with the press with respect to time is a huge challenge. The media is operating on a 24-hour news cycle while the strategic leader needs time to think, to respond, and to direct action. Strategic leaders and warfighters must learn to make decisions in real time within the context of a complex dynamically changing enivironment. The only way to achieve this competency is continued realistic training. In the face of less time to react and think, strategic leaders must develop operating procedures that distinguish between decisions that must be made now and those that can wait.

Rushing to be first with the story, the CNN effect affects accuracy of information. Initial reports are often inaccurate. Take for example, the early near real time reports of the recent shooting at the White House. The initial reports were that a 17-year-old boy had fired shots at the White House and had been evacuated for a self-inflicted gun shot wound. The real story was that a 47-year-old man had fired the shots and was evacuated for a gun shot wound inflicted by the Secret Service. Strategic leaders must ensure that they do not rush to inform. Under the pressure to appear to be telling "the whole" story, leaders must take the time to ensure they do not misinform.

OPERATIONAL RISK

In the CNN age of broadcasting, information is available globally in real time. For the warfighter the potential for the enemy knowing as much as he knows is a grave risk. How does a commander achieve surprise in such an environment? In the Gulf War, General Schwarzkopf achieved operational surprise by constraining press pools. In Haiti, the White House openly announced its intention to invade Haiti as part of its diplomatic strategy to pressure Cedras to back down. In Bosnia, General Clark issued a gag order; however, this order made him appear to be adopting Vietnam-era media relations. The debate on whether the military will be able to control the media or should be able to control the media in the next war continues.[62] The key for the operational commander will be to inform the public fully without endangering the mission. If steps to control the media must be taken, the public will have to understand why it is necessary. The military can play a role in informing the public to gain their support on why such restrictions on First Amendement rights must be taken.

In addition to operational security, the strategic leader and operational commander must consider the impact that information availability has on command and control. If information is available to several levels of command simultaneously, the question becomes 1) who will the decision-maker be and 2) who will act. A valid concern is that the National Command Authority (NCA), as a result of the CNN effect, will have the capability and desire to micromanage the war. In a CNN War where the NCA is held accountable for tactical actions by a public media in real time, the NCA may feel compelled to become more involved as the situation develops. This happened on a small scale in Panama.[63]

It would be easy to prescribe a solution by requiring carefully delineated areas of responsibility (to alleviate this problem). But in reality, what is evolving is an increasingly global situational awareness for the UN, NATO, and the NCA. This results in a fluid political situation complicated by international relationships, cultural values and divergent goals. It presents an increasingly complicated challenge for the operational commander who must maintain command and control of the military forces in theater while simultaneously maintaining situational awareness of changes at the strategic level. Just as a clearly communicated commander's intent solidifies unity of effort in the echelons below his level, a clearly defined strategic end state secures unity of purpose between the operational and strategic command levels. This places a premium on the operational commander having a thorough understanding of the military's role as an instrument of foreign policy.

As in the preceding section on tempo, strategic leaders and operational commanders can mitigate the difficulties of these complexities by training in peacetime. Because decisions will impact a much broader spectrum of warfare, training and education in all levels of warfare are essential. Human judgments and decisions can be rehearsed, practiced, and gamed in peacetime. In addition to realistic training in peacetime for commanders and staffs at the operational and strategic levels, this training must include members of the NCA, the media, and civilian agencies that participate in wartime operations. There will always be contingencies the military fails to predict. However, operational commanders must be practiced in interfacing with the NCA and civilian agencies under realistic time constraints. Thus, the military and the American people can count on them to be prepared in wartime decision-making situations before a live camera.

STRATEGIC ENABLER

In an era where "wars can be won [or lost] on the world's television screens as well as on the battlefield"[64], strategic leaders and warfighters must be pro-active and innovative in dealing

with the media. The satellite television age offers strategic leaders and warfighters exceptional opportunities to leverage the vast resources of the fourth estate. The media offers itself as a strategic enabler in a number of ways — to communicate the objective and endstate to a global audience, to execute effective psychological operations (PSYOPS), to play a major role in deception of the enemy, and to supplement intelligence collection efforts.

In spite of the cultural divisions and potential operational risks, strategic leaders must never cede the "CNN battlefield" to the media. To adopt a "control freak" attitude or to go so far as to issue "gag orders" wastes a valuable opportunity to communicate directly with the American people. It also risks an uninformed media becoming suspicious and alienated, resulting in inaccurate or biased reporting. In the face of a "gag order" during the Kosovo air campaign, Mr. Rosenthal, the New York Times foreign editor explained, "The press reflects what is going on. If the Administration is sitting on its hands and not explaining itself, we have to go to other analysts. And dissenters are always more willing to talk."[65]

Instead, the American military must leverage its standing as one of the most respected institutions together with global communications to make its case for using military force on a global stage. The fourth estate offers a superb mechanism for strategic leaders and warfighters to transmit operational objectives and goals, as well as to reinforce strategic policy objectives. To waste the opportunity to explain itself in the satellite television age where the military is more respected than the media, the military risks having the images of the battlespace presented to the global village, and perhaps more importantly to the American people and its troops, in a distorted manner. Inaccurate depictions of operations can have a devastating effect on what is often the US strategic center of gravity, the will of the American people, as well as the decision-making process at the strategic level.

In addition to being able to clarify for the American audience the linkage between operational goals and objectives to strategic policy objectives, the media has potential to support PSYOPS directed at an opposing force and its population. During Desert Storm the media provided General Schwarzkopf with the means to showcase US military might directly to the Iraqi military people. Senator Nunn has often stated that live reports of American paratroopers lifting off from Fort Bragg enroute to invade Haiti directly led to General Cedras' decision to step down.[66] As further evidence of the power of CNN, when the US military arrived in Haiti the day following Cedras' capitulation, the Haitians warmly welcomed the US troops.[67] In Bosnia, MG Nash "wanted to use the power of the world press to influence compliance by the

former warring factions with the Dayton Accords."[68] The world could witness confrontation or compliance first hand.

Media reporting can have a positive effect on US soldiers as well. At a 1991 MIT symposium on "Reporting the Gulf War," a Marine Corps representative "argued that the press coverage acted as a "force multiplier" by keeping Marines motivated and keeping US and world opinion firmly behind the Marines.[69] MG Nash also recognized this potential of the media to "enhance the soldiers' morale" when he made his decision to embed the media in First Armored Division in Bosnia.

Two other important roles the media can play are to provide intelligence to the military and to report as a part of a deception plan. Schwarzkopf's use of the media to obscure his famous left hook maneuver is well documented. However, the media's role as a source of intelligence is perhaps less obvious. The media can be an important source of information for two reasons. First, they may be in country before operations begin, as in Haiti, Bosnia, and Somalia. This gives them important firsthand knowledge of the people, its culture, the landscape, and events leading up to the operations. Second, reporters can sometimes move about the area of operations more freely than uniformed military can. "Because of their mobility, reporters can be an important source of 'open intelligence' for military commanders."[70]

In short, the military must leverage the media as an important strategic enabler. The media provides the military the means to ensure the American public is informed and engaged. The media provides the military with a global stage to send its message and execute its mission. It also has great potential as a force multiplier, a source of intelligence, and a resource for conducting PSYOPS.

CONCLUSION

The military and the media have significantly improved their relationship since the days of the Vietnam War, America's first television war. Satellite technology and the proliferation of 24/7 news networks have created and increased the so-called "CNN effect" on strategic level decision-making and how warfighters direct their commands. The military must understand, anticipate, and plan for this new dynamic. Friction between the military and the media will continue to some degree in the future. As Professor Loren Thompson of Georgetown University succinctly put it:

> Even if the dilemmas of war coverage are fully appreciated on both sides and journalists and soldiers develop a sympathetic view of each other's needs and responsibilities, friction will persist. Tension between major public institutions is inherent in the functioning of democracy, and it is not

> surprising that such tension is most pronounced in a setting where lives are lost and national interests are at stake.[71]

In spite of this friction, strategic leaders and warfighters must harness the increasing power of the fourth estate as a strategic enabler while hedging against operational risk.

WORD COUNT: 7178

ENDNOTES

[1] 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

[2] Carl Von Clausewitz as edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, On War (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univerity Press, 1976), 89.

[3] Henry G. Gole, "Don't Kill the Messenger: Vietnam War Reporting in Context." Parameters 26 (Winter 1996-97): 152.

[4] Bernard E. Trainor, "The Military and the Media: A Troubled Embrace", in Lloyd J. Matthews (Ed.), Newsmen and National Defense: Is Conflict Inevitable? (New York: Brassey's, Inc., 1991), 122.

[5] As quoted by Richard Newman in Burned by the Press: One Commander's Experience (case study), Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, National Securtiy Study, September 2000, 10.

[6] Peter Stoler, The War Against the Press: Politics, Pressure and Intimidation in the 80's. (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1986), 57.

[7] Ibid., 63.

[8] Dan Rather with Mickey Herskowitz, The Camera Never Blinks: Adventures of a TV Journalist (New York: William Morrow & Co. Inc., 1977), 195-211.

[9] Barry E. Willey, "The Military-Media Connection: For Better or For Worse," Military Review, vol. 78, no. 6 (Dec 1998- Feb1999):15.

[10] Colin Powell with Joseph E. Perisco, My American Journey (New York: Random House, 1995), 122.

[11] Peter Braestrup, Big Story: How The American Press and Television Reported and Interpreted the Crisis of Tet 1968 in Vietnam and Washington, Abridged edition of original 1977 two volume series, (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1994), 75.

[12] H. Norman Schwarzkopf with Peter Petre, It Doesn't Take a Hero, (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 258.

[13] Ronald H. Cole, Operation Urgent Fury: Grenada, (Washington, D. C.: Joint History Office, The Pentagon, 1997), 5.

[14] Barry E. Willey, "Military-Media Relations Come of Age", Parameters, 19 (March 1989): 76.

[15] Cole, 5.

[16] Winant Sidle, "Report of the CJCS Media-Military Relations Panel (Sidle Panel)" (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 23 August 1984), 1.

[17] Ibid., 8.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Miles Hudson and John Stanier, War and the Media: A Random Searchlight (Washington Square: New York University Press, 1998), 206.

[20] Bob Woodward, The Commanders (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 178.

[21] Powell, 292.

[22] Peter Arnett, Live From the Battlefield: From Vietnam to Baghdad 35 Years in the World's War Zones (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 342.

[23] Powell, 431-432.

[24] Ibid., 433.

[25] Arnett, 343.

[26] Perry M. Smith, How CNN Fought the War: A View From the Inside. (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1991) 23-29. See also, James Kitfield, "Is There a Widening Gap?: The Military and Civilian Society," in Military and the Media: Public Perceptions, Cantigny Conference Series (Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation, April 1992), 161.

[27] Hudson and Stanier, 270.

[28] Hudson and Stanier, 209.

[29] Powell, 529.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Cantigny Conference Series, Reporting the Next War. (Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation, April 1992), 12-13.

[32] Barrie Dunsmore, The Next War: Live? (Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government, March 1996), 5. See also Frank J. Stech, "Winning CNN Wars." Parameters 24 (Autumn 1994): 47.

[33] Paul E. Funk, "Accommodating the Wartime Media: A Commander's Task," Military Review, (April 1993): 79.

[34] Willey, "The Military-Media Connection: For Better or For Worse," 16.

[35] Warren P. Strobel, Late-Breaking Foreign Policy: The News Media's Influence on Peace Operations (Washington, D.C.: US Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 167.

[36] Strobel would not agree with this statement. He states that a common view is that the media "pushed" us in and "pulled" us out. However, he believes that the images were a result of failed American policy and a failure to articulate that policy to the American people and to Congress. However, many others agree that televised images pressured the United States to enter and withdraw. See, for example; Powell, 588.

[37] Frank Aukofer and William P. Lawrence, America's team—The Odd Couple: A Report on the Relationship Between the Media and the Military. (The Freedom Forum First Center, Vanderbilt University, 1995), 45.

[38] Strobel, 110-111.

[39] Ibid., 94.

[40] Peter Young and Peter Jesser, The Media and The Military: From the Crimea to Desert Strike (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 264.

[41] Dunsmore, 20.

[42] Charles Moskos, The Media and the Military in Peace and Humanitarian Operations (McCormick Tribune Foundation, January 2000), 26.

[43] Richard Newman, Burned by the Press: One Commander's Experience (case study). Maxwell School of Citizenship and PublicAffairs, Syracuse University, National Securtiy Study, September 2000, 1.

[44] Ibid.

[45] For a concise summary and analysis of these events see Moskos, 26. For details of these events see Newman. Newman was also embedded with Fontenot's unit. Fontenot did not dispute the accuracy of the rather colorful quotes.

[46] Newman, 6.

[47] Moskos, 26

[48] The most glaring error was that Fontenot never established ground rules with Ricks. Thus, Ricks believed everything was on the record. In sharp contrast, Fontenot's division commander, Major General William Nash, clearly established what was on and what was off the record. See Newman's case study for detail.

[49] Eric Schmitt,"Conflict in the Balkans: The Briefings; US Media Policy: Justify Air Assault But Skimp on Detail," New York Times, 27 March 1999, sec 1A, p.1.

[50] Craig R. Whitney, "Crisis in the Balkans: News Analysis: Memo From Brussels; Facts at briefings Scarce, But Polemicx Are Abundant," New York Times, 3 April 1999, sec 1A, p.1.

[51] Craig R. Whitney, "Crisis in the Balkans: The Alliance; NATO's Generals and Civilians Clash Over Bombing TV," New York Times, 9 April 1999, sec 1A, p.1.

[52] Author's observation.

[53] Aukofer and Lawrence, 29-30.

[54] Kitfield, 151-152.

[55] Ibid, 155.

[56] Ibid, 154-155.

[57] Michael D. Cohen, "The Gallup Survey Report," in Military and the Media: Public Perceptions, Cantigny Conference Series (Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation, April 1992), 18.

[58] Powell quoted in Woodward, 155.

[59] For an explanation of the psychological and sociological impact of images see Stech.

[60] As quoted in Strobel, 130.

[61] Rubin interviewed by Keith Porter, "Media vs Military", Common Ground, Air Date: 14 July 1998, Transcript published by the Stanley Foundation available at <http://www.commongroundradio.org/transcpt/98/9828.html>. Internet. Accessed 4 February 2001.

[62] Dunsmore quotes numerous points of views on this question.

[63] Powell related two instances when he was pressured to pass orders coming from the White House through Cheney to Thurman that were a direct result of 24-hour media news coverage in Powell, 431-433.

[64] Alvin Toffler and Heidi Toffler, War and Anti-War (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1993), 147.

[65] Felicity Barringer, "A New War Drew Methods for Covering It," New York Times, 21 June 1999, sec 1A, p.1.

[66] Leslie H. Belknap traveled with Senator Nunn in 1994/5 where he remarked on two separate occasions to audiences that reports that the 82d Airborne were on the way accelerated their last minute negotiations with Cedras'. General Powell also relates the last minute negotiations; Powell, 601.

[67] Strobel, 189.

[68] As quoted in Newman, 8.

[69] Stech, 47.

[70] Strobel, 229.

[71] Loren B. Thompson, "The Military Versus the Media" in Defense Beat: The Dilemmas of Defense Coverage, ed. Loren B. Thompson (New York:Lexington Books, 1991), 56.

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